



December 15, 2005

TO: Transportation Authority of Marin Commissioners

FROM: Dianne Steinhauser, Executive Director

RE: Main Sonoma Narrows – East Washington Interchange Funding Plan, Agenda Item 15

### **Executive Summary**

The Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) desires to use Marin Sonoma Narrows Transportation Congestion Relief Program (TCRP) funds for construction of the East Washington interchange. This item was discussed at the Executive Committee meeting on December 7, 2005. The Executive Committee was supportive of SCTA's efforts to deliver the East Washington Interchange project, but requested TAM and SCTA work together to develop an overall funding and phasing plan for the Marin Sonoma Narrows, and that an amount equal to the TCRP amount be prioritized for an early Marin phase.

The attached SCTA staff report outlines the background and status of the East Washington Interchange in Petaluma. The project is proposed as an early delivery element of the Marin Sonoma Narrows. The limits of the Marin Sonoma Narrows project along U.S. 101 are just south of State Route 37 in Novato to just south of Old Redwood Highway in Petaluma. The Marin Sonoma Narrows project is in the EIR/S preparation stage. The EIR/S is scheduled for completion in July 2007. Preparation of Plans, Specifications and Estimate (PS&E) would commence then, and projects would be ready to advertise for construction in July 2009.

The TCRP funding has been suspended every year since it was adopted in 2001, except for the current FY 2005-06, and relies on the Governor and Legislature not suspending the assignment of the sales tax to transportation purposes. The California Transportation Commission (CTC) has limited TCRP allocations to construction projects that were ready to go. TAM was able to take advantage of this and obtain a construction allocation for the 101 HOV Gap Closure this year.

The Marin Sonoma Narrows TCRP funds are currently programmed for PS&E, to be used after the completion of the EIR/S. There is a very high probability that the TCRP funding will not be available in the future. This strategy, programming the funds next year for construction, would position Sonoma to capture the funds if the Governor and Legislature choose to keep the sales tax on gasoline in transportation. However, PS&E funds would not be available when needed, and a replacement would need to be identified. The adoption of a full funding plan needs to be a condition, therefore, of TAM support.

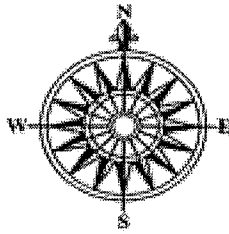
**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends:

1. That TAM direct staff to work with SCTA to program the TCRP funds to construct the East Washington interchange project, conditioned on the adoption of a funding and phasing plan that addresses logical phases of construction in the corridor, with a minimum of early funding in Marin County equal to the TCRP amount of \$15M.

Attachments:

SCTA Staff Report dated December 12, 2005



## **Staff Report**

**To:** Sonoma County Transportation Authority  
**From:** Suzanne Wilford, SCTA Executive Director  
**Re:** Item VIII-C: East Washington Interchange Funding Plan  
**Date:** December 12, 2005

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### **Issue:**

What is the status of the East Washington Interchange project and auxiliary lanes? What funds are available and how should the SCTA proceed in programming funds to keep the projects on track?

### **Background:**

In 1998 Caltrans proposed pulling out an element of the Marin Sonoma Narrows (MSN) project to be built as a separate project with a combination of county-share STIP and state discretionary ITIP funds. The proposed project was an auxiliary lane at southbound East Washington to Route 116 East. Studies progressed on the project but there were issues related to the proximity of the school, tree removal and inadequate ramps. There were also funding issues as costs increased on the construction of the Route 12 to Steele Lane project, \$2M in STIP funds on the auxiliary lane were reprogrammed to the Route 12 to Steele project.

In 2004 Caltrans recommended shifting the remaining funding from the aux lane to a ramp improvement project at East Washington, as the traffic operations analysis showed a greater benefit to the mainline operations if the East Washington ramps are improved. The SCTA deliberated on this issue and agreed to shift the focus only if Caltrans would keep an aggressive schedule on the new project and that the ITIP funds would be transferred.

The status of the auxiliary lane project is that it is ready to go out to construction with \$3.2M in ITIP funds. The East Washington project has environmental clearance and design is underway. However, the full funding for the East Washington project is in flux. The ITIP funds will not be transferred from the auxiliary lane project, as Caltrans now wants to pursue completing both projects. The funding available for East Washington will need to come from a variety of sources.

SCTA staff has been working with Caltrans and the City of Petaluma on the options available for funding, including a contribution of local funds and right of way. This has been a very fluid process but as it stands now, the three parties have agreed to the funding concept outlined below as a recommendation to the SCTA and Petaluma City Council.

Total Project Cost	\$22.7M
TCRP Funds	\$15.0M
Local Funds (contribution or loan)	\$ 7.5M
Measure M (widening funds)	\$ 0.1M
Earmark	\$ 0.1M

**Policy Impacts:**

The funding available for the MSN project (TCRP, Measure M, earmarks, etc.) is not clearly defined as strictly for widening the freeway and thus could be used for other elements of the larger project, such as ramp improvements. It is a policy decision how the MSN funds should best be utilized.

Use of TCRP funds will need to be discussed with Marin County as both Sonoma and Marin are eligible recipient. The need to expend TCRP funds sooner as opposed to later is great given the financial uncertainty of Prop 42. At this point, the CTC is only allowing TCRP funds to be expended on the construction phase of a project. The MSN project doesn't have any construction in the near future other than the East Washington projects.

**Fiscal Impacts:**

There is a potential impact to Measure M funds depending upon how much the SCTA may choose to put toward the full funding of the East Washington project. Should the SCTA choose to loan funds to the project it will result is a cash flow issue whereas a decision to allocate Measure M funds to the project that would reduce the funds available to any future phase of the 101 widening project in the area. A similar dynamic is present for the other funding sources as well.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Consider approving the use of TCRP and Measure M funds to match a local contribution from the City of Petaluma that will enable the East Washington project to go to construction in FY06/07.